

FINDINGS OF CONFORMANCE
MULTIPLE SPECIES CONSERVATION PROGRAM
Queen of Angels
P83-054W¹, Log No. 83-14-052A
July 31, 2003

I. Introduction

The proposed project is an expansion of an existing church on a 8.67-acre property. The expansion includes a new church building, administration building, a new hall room, expansion of the parking lot, a retention basin, and a secondary entrance/access. There is an existing biological open space easement on the eastern boundary of the site pursuant to Tentative Map 4958. The existing easement contains 0.75 acres of southern mixed chaparral and was created to protect on-site drainage features. The open space on the site will not be impacted by the proposed expansion, nor will it be used as mitigation for this project. Rather, the 0.75 acres within open space is considered to be a neutral area and not part of the regional MSCP preserve system.

The project site is located at 2569 West Victoria Drive, Alpine, California, within the Alpine Planning Community; in the unincorporated portion of San Diego County; APNs 402-440-03, 402-280-11 & 75. Most of the area surrounding the project site is developed with residential uses surrounding the property. The site is located within the Metro-Lakeside-Jamul segment of the County's Multiple Species Conservation Program (MSCP) and is therefore subject to the Biological Mitigation Ordinance (BMO).

Biological surveys of the site were completed by REC Consultants, Inc., in May of 2002. Elyssa K. Robertson of REC completed the biological resources report for P83-054W¹, which was submitted and accepted by the County in April of 2003. As stated in the report, and verified by County staff during site visits, the project site contains only two types of habitats. These two habitat types are divided into 6.52 acres of Southern mixed chaparral (SMC, 37120) and 2.15 acres of Urban/developed land (12000). Of the 6.52 acres of SMC on-site, 5.77 acres occur outside the existing open space easement and are considered to be impacted by the project. Some of this area has already been cleared and/or disturbed in the past but still qualifies as SMC and requires mitigation under the BMO.

No wetlands as defined by federal, state, or County standards occur within the limits of the proposed project. However, drainage occurs within the existing biological open space easement on the eastern side of the property. No impacts to the wetland or its habitat will result from the proposed expansion. No sensitive plant or animal species were found on the property.

All 7.92 acres of the property that is outside of existing open space will be considered impacted by the project. The impacts to SMC are estimated at 5.77 acres. Neither the project site nor the surrounding areas qualify as a Biological Resource Core Area (BRCA) of the MSCP. No on-site preservation is appropriate for the proposed project because the habitat is already fragmented and subject to indirect impacts from development. Table 1 summarizes the impacts and required mitigation for the Queen of Angels project in accordance with the BMO. As a Tier IV habitat type, the Urban/Developed areas of the site do not require any mitigation (Table 1). Mitigation for project-related impacts to the SMC have been proposed in the form of mitigation credits purchased off site from a County-approved mitigation bank located within a Biological Resource Core Area of the MSCP. As described within the Negative Declaration for P83-054W¹, credits purchased will include no less than 2.89 acres of southern mixed chaparral. This will meet the 0.5:1 mitigation ratio that is required under the BMO for impacts to 5.77 acres of chaparral habitat.

Table 1. Impacts To Habitat And Required Mitigation

Habitat Type	Tier Level	Existing (ac.)	Existing On-Site Open Space	Proposed Impacts (ac.)	Mitigation Ratio	Required Mitigation
Southern Mixed Chaparral	III	6.52	.75	5.77	0.5:1*	2.89
Developed	IV	2.15	N/A	2.15	N/A	N/A
Total:	--	8.67	0.75	7.92	--	2.89

* All potential impacts occur outside of any BRCA in the region.

The findings contained within this document are based on County records, staff field site visits and the biological resources report for P83-054W¹ prepared by REC Consultants. The information contained within these Findings is correct to the best of staff's knowledge at the time the findings were completed. Any subsequent environmental review completed due to changes in the proposed project or changes in circumstance shall need to have new findings completed based on the environmental conditions at that time.

The project has been found to conform to the County's Multiple Species Conservation Program (MSCP) Subarea Plan, the Biological Mitigation Ordinance (BMO) and the Implementation Agreement between the County of San Diego, the CA Department of Fish and Game and the US Fish and Wildlife Service. However, third Party Beneficiary Status and the associated take authorization for incidental impacts to sensitive species (pursuant to the County's Section 10 Permit under the Endangered Species Act) shall be not be conveyed for this project due to the previous disturbance of the habitat on-site.

II. Biological Resource Core Area Determination

The impact area and the mitigation site shall be evaluated to determine if either or both sites qualify as a Biological Resource Core Area (BRCA) pursuant to the BMO, Article VI.A.1.

- A. Report the factual determination as to whether the proposed Impact Area qualifies as a BRCA. The Impact Area shall refer only to that area within which project-related disturbance is proposed, including any on and/or off-site impacts.**

The Impact Area does not qualify as a BRCA since it does not meet any of the following BRCA criteria:

- i. The land is shown as Pre-Approved Mitigation Area on the wildlife agencies' Pre-Approved Mitigation Area map.**

The project site is not shown as being a Pre-Approved Mitigation Area (PAMA) on the MSCP County Subarea Plan maps. The nearest Pre-Approved Mitigation Area is the spoon-shaped area 0.75 miles northeast of the project site, which is public land that is connected to the Cleveland National Forest. A key PAMA in the Alpine area is Wright's Field, which is about 1 mile south of the proposed project.

- ii. The land is located within an area of habitat that contains biological resources that support or contribute to the long-term survival of sensitive species and is adjacent or contiguous to preserved habitat that is within the Pre-Approved Mitigation Area on the wildlife agencies' Pre-Approved Mitigation Area map.**

Much of the project site has been developed and/or disturbed; but it still supports a chaparral vegetation community. The habitat on the eastern side of the property has been preserved in biological open space due to the presence of a drainage feature. However, the site is not adjacent to or contiguous with areas of undisturbed habitat or regional biological significance. No sensitive species were observed on the project site. The site is somewhat small (8.67 acres), has undergone previous development and clearing of habitat, and is surrounded by development. The project site only contains disturbed, fragmented habitat and has little potential to support biological resources that would contribute to the long-term survival of any sensitive species.

iii. The land is part of a regional linkage/corridor. A regional linkage/corridor is either:

- a. Land that contains topography that serves to allow for the movement of all sizes of wildlife, including large animals on a regional scale; and contains adequate vegetation cover providing visual continuity so as to encourage the use of the corridor by wildlife; or**
- b. Land that has been identified as the primary linkage/corridor between the northern and southern regional populations of the California gnatcatcher in the population viability analysis for the California gnatcatcher, MSCP Resource Document Volume II, Appendix A-7 (Attachment I of the BMO.)**

The site is not part of a regional linkage/corridor as identified on MSCP maps nor is it in an area considered regionally important for wildlife dispersal. The site would not assist in local wildlife movement due to the existing development and habitat fragmentation on-site. Furthermore, the adjacent residential development on all sides deters wildlife movement in those directions. The nearest preserved land is about one mile to the northwest and the nearest Pre-Approved Mitigation Area is located about 0.75 miles northeast of the project site. There is no direct connection to those areas. The quality of habitat on-site is poor, and no large animals have been observed utilizing the project site. The proposed project is not located within or between regional California gnatcatcher populations, and the habitat on site is not expected to be utilized at all by the California gnatcatcher.

iv. The land is shown on the Habitat Evaluation Map (Attachment J to the BMO) as very high or high and links significant blocks of habitat, except that land which is isolated or links small, isolated patches of habitat and land that has been affected by existing development to create adverse edge effects shall not qualify as BRCA.

The site supports "Low Quality" and "Developed" habitat as identified on the MSCP Habitat Evaluation Map. Furthermore, the site is surrounded on three sides by developed land and does not link significant blocks of habitat.

v. The land consists of or is within a block of habitat greater than 500 acres in area of diverse and undisturbed habitat that contributes to the conservation of sensitive species.

There are no large areas of undisturbed habitat adjacent to the project site. The site itself supports just 6.52 acres of disturbed native vegetation. Approximately 0.75 acres of this chaparral community is preserved within an

existing open space to avoid impacts to the on-site drainage swale. There are no blocks of habitat in the immediate area that approximate 500 acres. Other surrounding land uses are primarily residential.

vi. The land contains a high number of sensitive species and is adjacent or contiguous to surrounding undisturbed habitats, or contains soil derived from the following geologic formations which are known to support sensitive species

- a. Gabbroic rock;**
- b. Metavolcanic rock;**
- c. Clay;**
- d. Coastal sandstone**

No threatened, endangered or narrow endemic species were detected during the biological survey. The site is disturbed with fragmented areas of native vegetation and invasive species from adjoining properties, which would not sustain significant populations of sensitive species. The soils on-site are mapped as Cienega coarse sandy loam. This soil type does not generally support a large number of sensitive, endemic species.

B. Report the factual determination as to whether the Mitigation Site qualifies as a BRCA.

Mitigation will take place off site with the purchase of credits in a County-approved mitigation bank, within a BRCA in the area. The required mitigation will be a minimum of 2.89 acres of southern mixed chaparral.

III. Biological Mitigation Ordinance Findings

A. Project Design Criteria (Article V.A)

The following findings in support of Project Design Criteria, including Attachments G and H (if applicable), must be completed for all projects that propose impacts to Critical Populations of Sensitive Plant Species (Attachment C), Significant Populations of Narrow Endemic Animal Species (Attachment D), Narrow Endemic Plant Species (Attachment E) or Sensitive Plants (San Diego County Rare Plant List) or proposes impacts within a Biological Resource Core Area.

The project will not affect any of these types of resources. Project design criteria, including Attachments G and H of the BMO, are not required.

IV. Subarea Plan Findings

A. Conformance with the objectives of the County Subarea Plan is demonstrated by the following findings:

1. The project will not conflict with the no-net-loss-of-wetlands standard in satisfying State and Federal wetland goals and policies.

No wetlands will be impacted as a result of the proposed project. A small drainage exists on the east side of the project site, which may qualify as a wetland by County or state standards. This drainage is protected within an existing biological open space easement. No increased pollutants, volume or velocity of flow will be introduced to the drainage.

2. The project includes measures to maximize the habitat structural diversity of conserved habitat areas including conservation of unique habitats and habitat features.

Only one native vegetation community exists on the property. Thus, the site does not support a highly diverse range of habitat types. The chaparral on site is not very diverse and is disturbed from previous clearing and invasive plant species. Additionally, the small size, isolation, and lack of high quality habitat and habitat features associated with the property make this site more suitable for development. Based on these conditions, on-site conservation is not required. The off-site mitigation measures will be more effective in maximizing diversity and preserving unique resources.

3. The project provides for conservation of spatially representative examples of extensive patches of Coastal sage scrub and other habitat types that were ranked as having high and very high biological values by the MSCP habitat evaluation model.

The site is not shown as having high biological value on MSCP maps. The maps depict the site as having low-quality and developed habitat along with the surrounding area. The isolated chaparral habitat on site does not represent extensive patches of native vegetation and does not have high biological value. The site is relatively small with only 6.52 acres of native vegetation on the property.

4. The project provides for the creation of significant blocks of habitat to reduce edge effects and maximize the ratio of surface area to the perimeter of conserved habitats.

Regardless of whether the proposed project is developed, the habitat on-site will continue to be heavily impacted by edge effects from surrounding residential development. The site is small enough that indirect effects such as exotic species, clearing of vegetation and trash have already impacted the interior of the habitat. On-site conservation of habitat as part of the proposed project would only create a smaller block of disturbed habitat. Off-site mitigation as proposed by the project will aid in creating large blocks of high quality habitat where edge effects are minimal and land is protected in perpetuity.

5. The project provides for the development of the least sensitive habitat areas.

The project will impact the entire 5.77 acres of southern mixed chaparral that are outside of open space. This habitat type is typically considered sensitive within the MSCP. The project site has been previously disturbed as a result of past activities and indirect impacts from the surrounding development. The habitat is now fragmented and has minimal value for long-term conservation of sensitive plants or wildlife. Therefore, the development of this site is not considered to be an impact to sensitive habitat.

6. The project provides for the conservation of key regional populations of covered species, and representations of sensitive habitats and their geographic sub-associations in biologically functioning units.

No threatened, endangered, narrow endemic or otherwise sensitive species were detected on the project site. Developing the site will not eliminate sensitive habitat or impact key populations of covered species.

7. Conserves large interconnecting blocks of habitat that contribute to the preservation of wide-ranging species such as Mule deer, Golden eagle, and predators as appropriate. Special emphasis will be placed on conserving adequate foraging habitat near Golden eagle nest sites.

Habitat on the project site is an isolated area subject to extensive clearing and development from existing uses. The surrounding residential development has already eliminated connection to larger, undisturbed areas in all directions. The site itself is too small and disturbed for larger mammals and raptors to reside permanently. The wildlife that would travel across the property tend to be smaller species that reside in heavily developed regions and have adapted to urban habitat, such as coyotes and ground squirrels.

- 8. All projects within the San Diego County Subarea Plan shall conserve identified critical populations and narrow endemics to the levels specified in the Subarea Plan. These levels are generally no impact to the critical populations and no more than 20 percent loss of narrow endemics and specified rare and endangered plants.**

No critical or narrow endemic species were detected on the site. Most sensitive species have a low potential to be present due to the disturbed nature of the site and surrounding development.

- 9. No project shall be approved which will jeopardize the possible or probable assembly of a preserve system within the Subarea Plan.**

The project site is not within an area of regional significance with regard to conservation of sensitive species and habitats. The residential setting and proximity to high-circulation roads lower the potential for the site to aid in conservation or wildlife dispersal. Developing the site will not hinder possible preserve systems.

- 10. All projects that propose to count on-site preservation toward their mitigation responsibility must include provisions to reduce edge effects.**

The site does not propose on-site preservation of habitat. An existing biological open space easement constrains the east side of the property due to a drainage feature that was identified during previous environmental review. The resources within the open space will not be used as mitigation for project impacts. Permanent fencing and signage will be placed around the on-site open space to prevent any potential encroachment that would result from the proposed church expansion.

- 11. Every effort has been made to avoid impacts to BRCAs, to sensitive resources, and to specific sensitive species as defined in the BMO.**

The project site is not within a Biological Resource Core Area. Besides the developed areas, the only habitat type found on-site is a Tier III, which means it is considered to be moderately sensitive. However, the site contains fragmented habitat after years of disturbance. Based on that fact, developing the entire 7.92 acres that are outside of existing open space is not considered a significant impact to sensitive habitat. There were no threatened, endangered or narrow endemic species detected on-site during the extensive surveys that were conducted. No significant populations of sensitive species are expected to reside on the property due to its disturbed condition and the

surrounding land uses. The project site as a whole is not considered sensitive, nor is there any particularly sensitive resources present. Avoidance is therefore, not necessary and project related impacts are not considered significant once mitigation pursuant to BMO requirements is incorporated.

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